

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

BY E. CORNELIUS,
PASTOR OF THE TABERNACLE CHURCH, SALEM.
SECOND EDITION.

www.CreationismOnline.com

PUBLISHED BY WHIPPLE AND LAWRENCE.

BY CROCKER AND BREWSTER, BOSTON,

AND BY JOHN P. HAVEN, NEW YORK.

Flagg & Gould, printers.

1826.

SERMON.

Ephesians 2. 18.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

IN examining the truths of revelation, it is important that our inquiries be conducted with candor and humility. The subjects treated of are so vast, and in many instances so much above the comprehension of the human mind, that our knowledge of them can be neither very extensive nor correct, unless we dismiss our prejudices, and rely simply on divine testimony. This is especially true when we undertake to investigate the deep things of God himself. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" If ever men need supernatural aid it is when they enter upon this unmeasurable field of inquiry. It should excite our gratitude, that God has been pleased to grant us such aid, in the Scriptures of revealed truth. He has there told us who he is, and what he requires. He has even disclosed important facts concerning the mode of his existence, and pointed out the manner in which he is to be approached and worshipped. Our duty is, to receive his instructions, not with the feelings of judges, but with the docility of learners. If we are told that God is a being of *infinite* knowledge, holiness, and justice, we must give full credit to the declaration, although we can neither comprehend the extent of such attributes, nor reconcile them with every event which occurs in his Providence. And so, if the Scriptures clearly inform us what honors are due to the only true God, and then direct us to render these honors to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, we must obey the direction with scrupulous exactness, whatever conclusions it may lead us to make concerning the *manner* in which God exists.

The verse which has been read naturally directs our attention to this important subject. The allusion which it makes to the Son, and to the Spirit, as well as to the Father, and the offices which it assigns to each in the work of salvation, will lead us to inquire what the Scriptures teach concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and will give to the discussion a practical bearing. Every serious and conscientious person must desire to know what honors are due to the Supreme Being, and how they are to be rendered. The doctrine of the Trinity is inseparably connected with these inquiries. No subject, therefore, can be more immediately or deeply practical.

I am aware that the test, independently of its connection with other passages of Scripture, does not fully establish the doctrine in question; but taking into consideration all which the sacred writings contain on the subject, it may properly be regarded as referring to that doctrine, and, consequently, as affording a suitable occasion for discussing it.

To render the subject more perspicuous my remarks will be made with reference to three particulars, viz.

- 1 What the doctrine of the Trinity is.
- 2 The proof of it.
- 3 The practical importance of it.

If the humble inquirer after truth can arrive at satisfactory conclusions on these points, he will possess what is most necessary to his faith and practice; and having this, he may safely leave other questions to be settled in a world of clearer light and more extensive knowledge.

1. I am to show what the doctrine of the Trinity is. In doing this, I remark, it is *not* that there are three supreme, independent, Gods. The language of the Bible, on this point, is such as no one can mistake. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is ONE Lord." After such a declaration, to say that there are, or can be, three independent Gods, would be to contradict the highest testimony in the universe. Were this the doctrine of the Trinity, or were it a fair and manifest conclusion from it, no evidence could prove it to be true. It would carry its own refutation on the face of it. Those who receive the doctrine have no such view of it. They adopt no opinion which in their apprehension infringes, in the least, that grand article of the Divine Unity, which they hold to be the basis of all true religion.

Neither is it the doctrine of the Trinity, as commonly deduced from the Scriptures, that God merely acts in three essentially different ways, or in three prominent and peculiar relations—that when he manifests himself in one of these, he takes the title of Father; when he appears in a second, he calls himself Son; and when he is exhibited in a third, he styles, himself Holy Spirit; just as when a human being sustains three offices, he may take different titles, and designate himself by one or other of them, according to the circumstances in which he acts. As the former statement contains *more* than is implied in the doctrine of the Trinity, so this contains *less*. The distinction which it makes between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is rather nominal than real, and falls far short of those personal descriptions which the Scriptures give of them.

I observe therefore, that the doctrine teaches the FACT, *That the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are the one, only living, and true God; and that there is in the Divine Nature, or Godhead, a foundation for such a distinction, as authorizes the separate application of the personal pronouns, I, thou, and he, to each of these names; and requires divine attributes and honors to be distinctly ascribed to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as well as to the Father.*

This the doctrine teaches *simply* as a fact; to be received, or rejected, according to the nature and degree of the evidence which is brought in support of it. The reality of such a distinction in the Godhead is, however, as independent of any *explanation* which may be given of it, as the reality of God's existence is independent of any explanation, how he exists. The credibility of a fact does not necessarily depend upon the possibility of explaining it in a satisfactory manner, but on evidence. What philosopher of modern times doubts, that certain bodies possess the properties which are called magnetism and electricity; or that all bodies possess the property of gravitation? Yet what philosopher has been able to do more than to describe these attributes of matter, as facts? The mind of Newton did not attempt anything beyond this.

The Scriptures reveal many things as facts, which they do not undertake to explain. They tell us that God is eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent; but what can we comprehend of things *infinite* in degree or duration? They teach us also that God is a Spirit; that he made all things from Nothing; that he will raise the dead; and bring every thought, feeling, and action into judgment—but what do we know of these things, except that they are realities? Yet they are as firmly believed and confided in, by all who receive the testimony of the Bible, as though they admitted a solution of every difficulty. So also may the doctrine of the Trinity be fully credited, though the fact which it asserts should remain forever unexplained. All that can reasonably be demanded is, that the terms in which it is expressed contain nothing *in itself* absurd, and that it have the testimony of the word of God for its support. That such is the case in regard to the statement which has been made, it will be my object to show.

2. I proceed therefore to exhibit the proof of the doctrine. I will first endeavor to show that the statement alleges nothing *in itself* absurd; and then that it is supported by the testimony of Scripture.

The absurdity usually alleged against the doctrine of the Trinity, and that to which all objections proceeding on the ground that it is *essentially incredible* may be reduced, is, that it teaches that *three* Gods are *one* God; which is saying that three and one are, *numerically*, the same.

Now if the language contained in the statement of the doctrine be justly chargeable with such a contradiction, it must be, either, because it *asserts* that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three Gods; or because it *implies* this. The first will not be pretended, since so far as mere declaration goes, it *asserts* the contrary. It declares that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the ONE only living and true God. — Neither does the statement *imply* that there are more Gods than one. Before such an allegation can be proved, it must be shown, either, that the proposition represents God as three, *in the same sense* in which he is represented as one; or that the distinction which it supposes in the Divine Nature is impossible. The former cannot be shown, because the statement represents God as three, in reference only to the distinction, *be it what it may*, which exists between the Father, Son, and Spirit; and as one, in reference to their union in the same Godhead; that is, it represents him as three, in *one* sense; and as one, in *another* sense. To assume the latter part of the alternative, relating to the impossibility of such a distinction as the statement asserts, would be taking for granted the main point in dispute, and is what no one can affirm, who does not presume to know all those distinctions of which the Divine Nature is capable. Besides, in order to prove that such a distinction is irreconcilable with the Divine Unity, the objector must show not only in what that distinction consists, but in what Divine Unity consists, and then that there is a contradiction between the two. But this no human intellect has done or can do.

For some valuable remarks on this point, see Storr's Elements of Biblical Theology recently translated from the German by Professor Schmucker of the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary in Pennsylvania; particularly the remarks of the Translator " On the relation of the Doctrine of the Trinity to reason." Book 2. Page 42-46 and Appendix.

Viewed, therefore, in whatever light it may be, the doctrine, as it has been stated, contains nothing *in itself* contradictory or absurd. It simply asserts a fact concerning the mode of the Divine existence, which for anything that appears in the declaration itself, may be true; and leaves the reality of it to be shown, like that of thousands of other facts, by testimony. The way is now prepared to exhibit the evidence which the Scriptures afford of the truth of the doctrine. This I shall endeavor to present in the following propositions.

1. *The Scriptures mention certain characteristics by which God is known, and distinguished from all other beings; and which he does not permit to be applied to any other than himself.*

If Jehovah is different from all other beings, it is plain that he must possess some things which are peculiar to himself; and which being known, necessarily distinguish him from all others. If we examine the Scriptures, we shall find that the sacred writers have exhibited God with all this prominence and peculiarity; designating him by titles, ascribing to him attributes and actions, and rendering him honors, which belong to no other being. A few quotations will show this in the clearest manner.

No one can doubt that the *epithets* used in the following passages belong only to the Supreme God. "That all men may know, that thou, whose name alone is *Jehovah*, art the *Most High* over all the earth.—This is eternal life, to know thee, *the only true God*.—*The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of Hosts is his name*.—Thus saith the Lord, 'the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts, *I am the first, and I am the last*.'" [Ps. 63: 18. John 17:3. Jer. 32: 18, 19. Is. 44: 6]

Equally manifest is it, that the *attributes* which are mentioned, or implied, in the following citations, are intended to be understood as belonging to the only true' God. "For thou, *EVEN THOU ONLY knows the hearts* of all the children of men.—I the Lord *search the heart*, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways.—God is greater than our heart and *knows all things*—*Can* anyone hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? *Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?*—The Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, *I am the almighty God*.—*The eternal God is thy refuge*.—I am the Lord, *I change not*." [1 Kings 8: 39. Jer. 17: 10. 33:23, 24. 1 John 3: 20. Gen. 17: 1. Deut. 30: 27. Mal. 3: 6.] In these passages omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, and immutability, are described as distinguishing attributes of Jehovah.

Creation is a work, which is uniformly represented in Scripture as belonging to God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. —Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preserves them *all*. —*He that built all things is God*." It is declared also, that the work of creation was executed by God *alone*, without the intervention of any helper or associate. "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, *I am the Lord that makes all things*; that stretches forth the heavens *ALONE*; that spreads abroad the earth *BY MYSELF*." It is one method of describing false gods, to designate them as "gods which have *not* made the heavens and the earth." [Gen. 1: 1. Neb. 9:6. Heb. 3:4. Is. 44: 24. Jer. 10: 11.] Of course he who did create them is the true God.

Other portions of Scripture mention it as the special prerogative of God to forgive sin, and to judge the world at the last *day*. He is exhibited also as the only being worthy of supreme love and confidence, and as the only lawful object of religious worship. The following citations may serve as examples. "I, even I, am he that *blotted out thy transgressions*.—*God shall bring every work into judgment*, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.—So then every one of us shall give account of himself to *God*.—*Cursed* be the man that trusted in man, and makes flesh his arm blessed is the man that *trusted in the Lord*, and whose hope the Lord is.—Fear God and give glory to him, and worship him that made heaven and earth and the fountains of waters.—*THOU SHALT WORSHIP NO OTHER GOD*." [Is. 43:25. Eccl. 12: 14. Rom. 14: 12. Jer. 17: 5, 7. Rev. 14: 7. Ex. 34: 14]

Such is the language by which the true God is known and distinguished. Everyone perceives that the being who can justly claim these titles, attributes, works, and worship, is, and must be, the supreme God, the Jehovah of the Scriptures. They are also what God himself assumes as his peculiar prerogatives, and forbids to be applied to any other being. In such explicit and solemn terms as these does he assert the rights of the Supreme Divinity. "I, even I am he; and *there is no God with me*.—I am God, and *there is none like me*.—I am the Lord, that is my name; and *my glory will I not give unto another*. —Thou shalt have no other Gods *before Me*." [Deut. 32: 39. Is. 46: 9. 42: 8. Ex. 20: 3.]

But if it is true that Jehovah will not give, nor delegate the attributes and honors which belong to him and constitute his glory, to another; if there is no God *with him*, and none *like him*, in the universe, it follows, that the being who possesses these attributes and may claim these honors, is the only true God, Thus it appears that the Scriptures mention certain characteristics by which God is known and distinguished from all other beings; and which he does not permit to be applied to any other than himself. This is the first proposition.

2. *These same characteristics, which belong only to God, and are forbidden by him to be applied to any other, are ascribed in Scripture, by God himself, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*

That this is true in regard to the Father, no one can have any doubt. I shall endeavor to show that it is true also of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The limits of a discourse permit the introduction of but few passages on each of these branches of the subject. I shall select such as are most obvious in their import, and which it is believed will bear the strictest examination.

Several of the distinguishing *names and titles* of God, are applied to Christ in the following passages, in the same unqualified manner in which we have before seen that they are applied to Jehovah. "Whose are the Fathers; and of whom, as concerning the flesh, *Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever*.—*And we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ; this (or he) is the true God* and eternal life."

Dr. Doddridge, one of the most candid and judicious of critics, and who translates the Greek pronoun in this manner, says of this passage; "It is an argument of the Deity of Christ, which almost all those who have wrote in its defense have urged, and which I think none who have opposed it, have so much as appeared to answer." Expositor in loc. See also Stuart's Letters to Channing, 3d Ed. p. 83.

The writer of the Apocalypse represents Christ as saying "I am Alpha and Omega, *the first and the last.*" The prophet Isaiah says "I saw also Jehovah sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple;" yet the evangelist John, speaking of Christ, refers to this vision and observes; "These things said Esaias, when he saw his (Christ's) glory, and spoke of him." Christ is therefore Jehovah, whom the prophet saw. [Rom. 11: 5. 1 John 5: 20. Rev. 1: 11. Is. 6: 1 compared with John 12: 41.]

In the passages which follow, the distinguishing *attributes* of God are ascribed to Christ in the same unqualified manner. "In the *beginning* (from eternity) was the Word.—I am alpha and omega, *the beginning and the end.*—And, thou, Lord, (addressed to Christ) in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish, but thou remains; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them and they shall be changed; *but thou art the same*, and thy years shall not fail.—All the churches shall know that I AM HE *which searches the reins and the hearts.*—As the Father *knows* me even so *know I* the Father."—Of Christ also it is said that "he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby *he is able even to subdue all things to himself.*" It was Jesus who said to his disciples "where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I in the midst of them;*" and who assures his ministers "*Lo I am with you always*, even to the end of the world." [John 1: I. Rev. 22: 13. Heb. 1: 10-12. Rev. 2: 23. John 10: 15. Phil. 3:21. Matt. 18: 20. 28: 20.] It can scarcely be necessary to remark, that the attributes which are here ascribed to Christ are the same, and for the most part are expressed in the same language, with those which we have before seen to be descriptive of the only true Jehovah.

Creation, which is so often claimed in the Scriptures as the work of God *alone*, is ascribed to Christ in the most direct and positive terms, as the following quotations will show. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, *all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made.*—*The world was made by him.*" In the following passages he is declared to be the Preserver, and Upholder, as well as the Creator, of the universe. "For by him (i.e. Christ) were all things created that are in heaven, and 'that are in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created BY him and FOR him, and he is BEFORE all things, *and by him all things consist.*—*Who* being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and *upholding all things by the word of his power*, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." [John 1: 1, 2, 10. Col. 1: 16, 17. Heb. 1: 3.] What stronger terms is it possible to use, than are here employed in describing the creative and preserving power of Christ? Who would hesitate a moment to understand them of the Supreme Jehovah, if they were unconnected with the name of Christ? What then should hinder them from being so understood now that they are inseparably joined to his name? Certainly, if Christ is *before* all things, if all things in the universe were *created* by him, and are upheld by him, there must be a sense in which he is not himself a *creature*; and if he is not created, who else can he be but the uncreated God? How irreconcilable are such passages as these with every theory which reduces the Lord Jesus Christ to the condition of a dependent being! Will those, who contend that he had no existence till he appeared on earth, show us how he could create the world four thousand years before he was born; or, with what propriety it could be said that "*without him was not anything made which was made,*" when, as they at the same time tell us, nothing was *made by him?*

To forgive sin is a divine prerogative which was claimed and exercised by Jesus Christ. To the sick of the palsy he said, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" [Matt. 9:2-6] and when the Jews accused him of blasphemy for pretending to such divine authority, he replied by asserting his power to forgive sin.

To Christ also it belongs to raise the dead, and judge the world at the last day. "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.—For we must all appear before the *judgment seat of Christ*, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or whether it be bad." [John 5: 28, 29. 2 Cor. 5: 10.]

There are, in short, no acts of confidence and homage greater than those which the Scriptures frequently represent as being rendered to Christ. "I can do all things *through Christ which strengthened* me.—Whosoever believeth (i.e. trusted) in him shall not be ashamed.—Then Peter said, silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee: *in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, rise up and walk.—And they stoned Stephen invoking (or praying,) and saying *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" [Greek, literally *calling upon.*] Paul addresses his first epistle to the Corinthians "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place *call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord;*" which implies that it was the practice of all who were Christians *to pray to Christ.*

See Schleusner's Lexicon. So common was it among the early Christians to pay religious homage to Christ, that it was usual to distinguish them by this circumstance. Pliny, Governor of Bithynia, in a letter to the Emperor Trojan, says he had made inquiries concerning the Christians, and learned, "that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight and *to sing with one another a hymn to Christ as God.*" Carmen Christo quasi Deo. (Lib. X. Ep. 91.) Those who have not opportunity to consult the original, may find a translation of the entire letter in Milner's Church History, Vol. 1. pp. 147-150. Another and perhaps a still more decisive testimony may be found in Eusebius, (History Ecclesiastical, v. 25.) where for the sake of proving that the opinion that

Christ is a mere man is a departure from the primitive faith, he quotes a writer still more ancient as saying " *Moreover all the psalms and hymns of the Brethren written from the beginning by the faithful, celebrate the praises of Christ, the Word of God, and attribute divinity to him.*"

This same apostle declares that he thrice besought the Lord, by whom he evidently means Christ, that the thorn in the flesh might be taken away; and received for answer, " my grace is sufficient for thee." [Phil. 4:13. Rom. 10:11. Acts 3:6. 7:59. 1 Cor. 1:2. 2 Cor. 12:8, 9.] It may be added, that " to call upon the name of the Lord," is a phrase of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, denoting prayer or religious invocation. Thus Abraham " built an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." [Gen. 12:8.] In a still more explicit manner is Christ acknowledged to be the object of religious worship in the following passages. " *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, OF THINGS IN HEAVEN, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.—And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, [Greek often rendered " living ones," or " living creatures." See Doddridge's Note on Rev. 4: 6.] and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him who sits upon the throne, AND unto the LAMB forever and ever.*" [Phil. 2:10, 11. Rev. 5: 11-13.]

What higher honors can creatures render to the supreme Jehovah, than are here paid by the intelligent universe to Christ? If to these honors we add the divine names, titles, attributes, and works which we have seen are so abundantly given him in the Scriptures, and which the Scriptures themselves represent as descriptive of the only true God, the truth of the proposition which we are considering, so far as it relates to the Son, must be not only convincing, but overwhelming.

I proceed now to show,

That the characteristics of true and proper Godhead are ascribed, also, in the Scriptures, to the Holy Spirit. No one, let his opinion of the doctrine of the Trinity be what it may, can well doubt that the phrase Holy Spirit, or as our translators usually have it, Holy Ghost, is frequently used in Scripture in such a manner as to denote something truly divine. Who, for example, can read such declarations as the following, and not perceive that the sacred writers connected with the phrase the idea of supreme divinity? " Peter said unto Ananias, why has Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the *Holy Ghost?* Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto *God.*—*Wherefore* the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart," etc. [Acts 5: 3, 4. Heb. 3: 7.]

In the passage referred to in the 95th Psalm, it is *Jehovah* who says " Today, if ye will hear," etc. The Scriptures are declared in one place to be given *by inspiration of God;* and in another it is said, that "holy men of God spoke *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*" All must admit that in cases like these the term denotes something in the proper sense divine. The only question is whether the Scriptures mean by it anything *distinct from the Father,* or so distinct as to justify the separate application of the personal pronouns, and the ascription of divine actions and honors; which is what the doctrine of the Trinity asserts. On this point it would seem as if the Bible was as definite as it could be.

In the *first* place, there are many passages in which the Holy Spirit is spoken of in a personal manner. " Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were *forbidden of the Holy Ghost* to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but *the Spirit suffered them not.*—The Holy Ghost said, separate ME Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.—The Spirit said unto Peter, Behold three men seek thee. Arise therefore and get thee down, and go with them doubting nothing, for I have sent them.—Howbeit when HE, the Spirit of truth is come, HE will guide you into all truth." [Acts 16: 6, 7. 13: 2. 10: 19, 20. John 16:13. See also Acts 15:28 etc.]

In the *next* place, there are passages in which the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinguished from one another *in the same sentence,* and the personal pronouns applied to them severally. Such is the fact in the following declarations of our Savior to his disciples. "I will pray the FATHER and HE shall give you another COMFORTER that HE may abide with you forever; even the SPIRIT of truth, WHOM the world cannot receive because it sees Him not, neither knows Him; for HE dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.—The COMFORTER, which is the HOLY GHOST, WHOM the FATHER will send in MY name, HE shall teach you all things." [John 14:16, 17, 26.]

What can be more obvious than the import of such language? Here are no metaphorical allusions, no poetic images, to affect the meaning. All is simple, unimpassioned prose. If then there is any distinction between the Father, and the Son, there is no less distinction between them both, and the Holy Spirit. The second proposition is therefore proved to be true.

From the fact thus established, that divine prerogatives are ascribed in Scripture to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, it might naturally be expected that the sacred writers would sometimes exhibit them *conjointly,* and sometimes *interchangeably;* as performing separate acts, and as performing the same acts. Such is the fact.

Each of these Divine Names is introduced in a peculiar connection in the following passages. "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. —Elect according to the foreknowledge of *God the Father*, through sanctification of the *Spirit*, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of *Jesus Christ*. —Praying in the *Holy Ghost*, keep yourselves in the love of *God*, looking for the mercy of our *Lord Jesus Christ* unto eternal life.—The grace of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, and the love of *God*, and the communion of the *Holy Ghost* be with you all.—For through *Him*, i.e. Christ, we both have access by one *Spirit* unto the *Father*." [Matt). 28: 19. 1 Pet. 1: 2. Jude 1:20-21. 2 Cor. 13: 14. Eph. 2: 18.]

The words *God*, and *Christ*, are used *interchangeably* in many instances like the following. "For we shall all stand before the *judgment seat of Christ*; for it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to *God*. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to *God*." The resurrection of Christ is often ascribed to the power of God, and yet Christ declared that he would raise his own body. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down OF MYSELF; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment (or commission) have I received of my Father." The same union of operation with the Father, is strongly implied in those passages which speak of the resurrection of mankind; which is sometimes ascribed to God and sometimes to Christ. [Rom. 14: 10-12. 2 Cor. 1: 1. Compare John 10: 17, 18. 5: 28, 29. Compare Acts 26: 8.]

The Father and the Son are exhibited both *conjointly*, and *interchangeably* as the object of prayer, and the source of spiritual blessings in such instances as these. "Now *God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ*, direct our way unto you. —Now *our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father*, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work." [1 These. 3: 11, 12. 2 Thess. 2: 16, 17.] In other instances they are joined in the *same act of worship*. "Blessing and honor, and glory and power, be unto HIM that sits upon the throne, and unto the LAMB forever.—Salvation to our Gon who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." [Rev.: 13. 7: 10.]

Whoever considers the import of such passages will surely not be surprised that our Savior himself should declare, that whatsoever things the Father doeth, "*the same doeth the Son likewise*;" and on this ground should demand "that all men might honor the Son, *even as they honor the Father*." [John 5: 19, 23.]

On the supposition that the doctrine of the Trinity is true, these passages admit of an easy interpretation. But if that be rejected, it is difficult to conceive what explanation can be given of them which is consistent with the exclusive rights of the Godhead. It would shock every mind to hear other names associated, as these are throughout the Scriptures, with the ever blessed Jehovah, who is infinitely jealous of his own honor, and has threatened with severe punishment all those who give his glory to another.

Besides, if the declarations which ascribe the attributes and honors of Godhead to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, are not to be understood literally but figuratively, as has sometimes been said, how is it to be accounted for, that the sacred writers have nowhere used the same figurative style when speaking of those who are confessedly inferior to God? Why is it used only in reference to the Son and to the Holy Spirit? The examples in which the word *god is* applied to idols, and in two or three instances to men, are so different both in the form of expression, and in their connection, that they cannot be considered as at all analogous. Let the style which the Scriptures use in their descriptions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, be taken *as a whole*, and it is hazarding nothing to say, that it is without a parallel in the Bible. Whence this great, this wonderful singularity? Either the sacred writers are chargeable with an anomaly which cannot be reconciled with *any* just principles of interpretation, and the tendency of which is to unsettle the mind concerning their meaning in other places; or, the language in which they ascribe divine attributes and honors to the Son and to the Spirit, as well as to the Father, must be received according to its plain import, and the doctrine as it has been stated in this discourse be allowed to be sustained.

I have now endeavored to establish two propositions.

FIRST. *The Scriptures mention certain characteristics by which God is known and distinguished from all other beings; and which he does not permit to be applied to any other than himself.*

SECOND. *These same characteristics which belong only to God, and are forbidden by him to be applied to .any other, are ascribed in Scripture, by God himself, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*

It follows by unavoidable inference,

THIRD. *That the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are the one only living and true God; and that there is in the Divine Nature, or Godhead, a foundation for such a distinction as authorizes the separate application of the personal pronouns, I, thou, he, to each of these names, and requires divine attributes and honors to be distinctly ascribed to the So*, and to the Holy Spirit, as well as to the Father.*

This is the doctrine of the Trinity which it was proposed to establish. A conclusion which is built upon such premises can never be shaken. Before it can be overthrown, it must be shown either, that the testimony of Scripture is unworthy of confidence; in other words, that the Bible is not the word of God; or, that interpreted according to the acknowledged principles of language it does not ascribe divine attributes and honors

to the Son and to the Spirit, as well as to the Father. The first will not be attempted till the days of avowed infidelity shall have returned; and the last, it is believed, cannot be done, while the Scriptures remain what they now are, and the meaning of words is the same. The truth of the doctrine which we are considering, may be regarded, therefore, as resting upon an immovable foundation. So long as there is any truth in the axiom, that *things which are equal to the same, are equal to one another*, so long may it be demonstrably shown from the inspired records, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are *equally divine*, and consequently that the statement contained in this discourse is true.

Here we might close the argument, and proceed to discuss the practical importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. But lest it should be supposed, that the conclusion to which we have come has been drawn without reference to the objections which are alleged by those who reject the doctrine, I will notice some of the principal of them, and examine how far they rest upon a solid foundation.

The objection, that the doctrine is absurd in *itself*, being of the nature of a previous question, which must be settled before any direct testimony can be received, has been already considered, and shewn to be groundless so far as the statement in the present discourse is concerned.

It is also objected, that there are many passages of Scripture in which Christ is represented as *inferior* to the Father; and that these are inconsistent with his Supreme Divinity.

The passages to which reference is made are such as the following. "My Father is greater than I.—The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do.—The Father loveth the Son and hath *given* all things into his hand.—All power is *given* unto me in heaven and in earth.—For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.—God, who created all things *by* Jesus Christ — The Father judges no man, but hath *committed all* judgment to the Son.—Of that day and hour knows no man; no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.—Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father; and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." [John 14:28. 5: 19. 3: 35. Matt. 28: 18. Eph. 3:9. 5: 22. 1 Tim. 2: 5. Mark 13:32. 1 Cor. 15: 24, 28.]

It will not be doubted that these quotations exhibit the difficulty to which the objection refers, in as strong a light as any in the New Testament. They have been selected with this design. In what way then are these passages to be reconciled with those which ascribe divine attributes to Christ?

In answer to this inquiry it is to be observed, that the Scriptures represent Christ as possessing an *original* and an *assumed* character. In the first place they assert that he existed and acted long before he appeared on earth. "Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, *before Abraham was I am*.—And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, *with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*." We are told also that Christ in his preexistent state was Divine. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the next place the Scriptures describe a great and wonderful change as having taken place in the condition of Christ. The evangelist John declares that the " *Word became flesh, and dwelt among us*." Paul says, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, *God was manifest in the flesh*." [In support of the common reading of this passage, it will be sufficient to refer to the critical works of Mill, McKnight, Horne, and to the *Greek New Testament* by Knapp.] *Other* passages are more minute in the account which they give of this change. But nowhere is it more strongly avowed, or more fully exhibited, than in the following passage; "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." [John 1:14. 1 Tim. 3:16. Phil. 2: 6, 7. On this last passage see Stuart's Letters to Channing.]

Who does not perceive in these passages a twofold description of the person of Christ, in which he is represented as possessing an *original* and an *assumed* character. But let this distinction be made, and the difficulty which has been referred to, ceases to exist. In his *original* character Christ is Divine, and is therefore represented as equal with the Father, in the numerous passages which have been brought to prove his Divinity. But in his *assumed* character he is man and Mediator, and is accordingly represented in other places as limited in knowledge and power, and as acting in subordination to the will of the Father. As a man he is, and must be, inferior to the Father in everything which distinguishes the human from the Divine nature; and he can have no knowledge of future events, and of course can have none of the day of judgment, any farther than it is revealed to him. To suppose that he can, would be to suppose either that human nature does not properly belong to him, or that a finite mind can, of itself, discern what is obvious only to the eye of Omniscience; neither of which is true.

"We readily avow that we pretend not to know in what manner the divine and human natures, which we attribute to the Messiah, are united in his sacred person. We believe that in this respect especially his name is WONDERFUL, and that 'no one knows the Son but the Father.' The Scriptures appear to us, on the one hand, to teach the existence of such a union as produces a personal oneness; and, on the other, to exclude the notion of transmutation or confusion of the essential properties of either nature with respect to the other. It follows, that whatever communication of supernatural qualities, powers, or enjoyments, was made by the indwelling Divinity to 'the man Christ *Jesus*,' it was made in various degrees, and on successive occasions, as the Divine Wisdom judged fit: and this necessary limitation would apply to times and seasons,' which the Father has put in his own power, as well as to any other conceivable class of objects."—*Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*, by John Pye Smith, D. D. Vol. II. p. 340. London, 1821.

In like manner Christ, in his complex character of *God and man*, is invested by the Father with the office of Mediator, and is said to receive from him, a kingdom, and authority to govern the universe. It is in this character also that he is commissioned to execute the work of redemption, to make atonement for sin, and to judge the world at the last day. All is done in subordination to the will of the Father; and when he shall have answered the ends for which this commission was given him, he will resign it, and with it, the kingdom which he has received, that God may be all in all. In this manner the various classes of passages, which speak of our Savior's person and attributes, may be easily reconciled, and in no other way can they be. If Christ be not truly and properly Divine, no consistent explanation can be given of those passages which represent him as equal to the Father. If he be not also man and Mediator, none can be given of those which speak of his subordination to the Father. But if both characters are allowed to be united in one complex person, all the passages harmonize with each other. Nor is the supposition of two natures in Christ, any more inadmissible, than the supposition of two natures in man. If the attributes of animal and spiritual existence may be combined so as to form one person, who will say that it is beyond the reach of almighty power to combine human and divine attributes in the person of Jesus Christ? We speak of man as being mortal and immortal; yet no one mistakes our meaning; because when we speak of man *as mortal*, everyone understands us to refer to his *corporeal* nature; and when we speak of him as *immortal*, to his *spiritual* nature. Nor need the sacred writers be misapprehended, when they attribute two natures to Christ, and speak of him, sometimes in reference to one, and sometimes in reference to the other.

Still it may be asked, if Christ is himself God, how can God be said to have created the world *by* Christ? To this it may be answered, that it has already been shown, that the distinction between the Father, Son, and Spirit, though not inconsistent with the Divine Unity, is nevertheless a *real* distinction, and such as lays the foundation for a *relation* of some kind between them. This relation, if expressed at all, must be expressed in the language of men. But it is manifest that all such language is inadequate to describe the precise nature of that relation; and consequently must be regarded as the language of approximation merely. The apostle John, as we have seen, says concerning Christ, " In the beginning was the Word (*Logos*), and the Word was WITH God, and the Word WAS God. The same was in the beginning WITH God." Suppose now that this phraseology should be understood *literally*, might not the objector ask with the same propriety, if the Word was himself God, how could he be represented as being *with* God? Everyone must see that while a distinction of some kind is indicated by this language, the terms which express it are used in a peculiar and qualified sense.

In like manner, when it is said that God created the world *by* Christ, the words are to be understood as referring to that **DISTINCTION** which exists in the Divine Nature, between the Father and the Son; and which, whether it consist in the order of operation, or in something else, renders it proper to ascribe the work of creation to the Divine Word or Logos, in a *special* sense. In accordance with this view of the subject is the representation of the evangelist John in the place referred to. " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things (i.e. the universe) were made **BY HIM**; and **WITHOUT HIM** was not any thing made which was made. The world was made **BY HIM** And the Word (*Logos*) was made flesh; and dwelt among us; and we beheld **HIS** glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the **FATHER**, full of grace and truth." Two things are here manifest: the writer distinguishes between the Father and the Word or Logos; and he ascribes creation directly to the latter--that is, he ascribes it to God, *as the Logos*. It is doubtless with reference to the same distinction, that God is said to create the world **BY** the Logos or Christ.

Let the remarks which have now been offered be attentively considered, and it will be seen that the doctrine of the Trinity, instead of being open to the objection which has been discussed, is the only system which effectually obviates that objection, since it is the only one which corresponds with the entire representation of the Scriptures themselves.

The use of the word "person" as applied to the Trinity has given rise to an objection of another kind. It has seemed to those who make the objection, to imply the existence of three distinct Gods; as when applied to men it denotes a separate, conscious being. But it should be remembered that the meaning of this, like that of every other word, is entirely arbitrary. It may signify more or less, according to the design of those who use it. As applied to the Trinity, it denotes simply, *that* in the Divine Nature, be it what it may, which lays the foundation for ascribing the characteristics of the true God to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, and for applying to each the *personal* pronouns, I, thou, and he. For this purpose, it is perhaps as convenient a word as any other. Still it is not a term of Scripture, and may be used or not, according to each one's views of its propriety. All that is necessary is, that some word or phrase be adopted to express the distinction which has been mentioned, and that when "person" is thus used, it be clearly understood, that it is employed not in an ordinary, but in a special and qualified sense. Notwithstanding, to show that the doctrine is independent of this word, and may *be* discussed without it, it is not used in the present discourse.

Should it after all be objected, that the subject is mysterious, and therefore not to be believed; it is admitted that so far as the *explanation* of the fact which it teaches is concerned, it is above the comprehension of human minds. We acknowledge that what we have to present on this subject is not theory, but *fact*; not explanation, but evidence. Is it however rational, is it safe, to reject a fact which is supported by good evidence, merely because we cannot explain it? If so, then there are many facts relating to the character and government of God, which may be disbelieved, though God himself has testified to the truth of them. Nor may we stop here. The natural world presents innumerable phenomena which no human intellect can explain, and which, therefore, we may disbelieve, though we have the testimony of our senses to their reality. A principle which leads to such conclusions can have no claim to confidence; and no objection founded upon it is worthy of a serious and enlightened mind. The only question to be decided is, Do the Scriptures, interpreted according to the established principles of language, teach that there is in the Divine Nature such a distinction as has been mentioned? If they do, there is no alternative but to admit the fact, or to deny that the Bible is the word of God.

I am aware how common it is to plead the simplicity of other views of the Divine Nature, as a reason for rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. But let us not be deceived. There is a simplicity which is not of the Gospel. No religion is more simple, none more opposed to everything like mystery, than Deism. Yet Deism is not the religion of the Gospel. It was not thus that Paul reasoned on this most profound of subjects. Neither the unbelief of the Jew, nor the learning and philosophy of the Greek, could prevent him from saying wherever he went, " Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; *God was manifest in the flesh.*" To follow such an example cannot but be safe. It is at least wise.

But there need be no difficulty in comprehending this doctrine, so far as correct views are necessary to correct practice. We have only to remember the offices which are sustained, or the works which are performed, by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, to acknowledge them in those offices and works, and to pay them the honors which are due to their divine character. No matter how illiterate a man may be, he can understand the FACT, that we have access to the Father, through the mediation of the Son, and by the aid of the Spirit; and this is the substance of the doctrine of the Trinity, considered in its relations to our duty and happiness. Christians may adopt whatever methods of explanation and illustrations they please; these should never be made the standard of a Scriptural faith. The great and visible bond of their union should consist in acknowledging the *fact*, that supreme and divine honors are due to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, and in a correspondent practice.

3. It remains to point out the practical importance of the doctrine which has been discussed.

Were it not that the subject is one of great practical interest, it is difficult to conceive why it should occupy so prominent a place in the Scriptures. The design of revelation is not to amuse men with curious speculations, but to teach them their duty. It might therefore be inferred from the fact, that so much is said concerning the divine character of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that the doctrine of the Trinity which teaches their union in the Divine Nature is of fundamental importance. A few considerations, which is all that the limits of the discourse admit, will show that such is its real character.

In the *first* place, it is essentially connected with the question of religious worship. If there be a subject of deep and solemn moment, it is this. There can be but one lawful object of religious worship, because there is but one only living and true God.

He who worships any other being, or who does not worship God according to his *true* character, is an idolater, and must answer for an *offence* which is everywhere represented in the Scriptures as one of great criminality. If then it be important that we know to whom our religious homage is due; if we would avoid the sin of idolatry and not worship an imaginary Deity, it is our duty to believe the doctrine of the Trinity and conform our practice to it; since ally other God than that which it describes, is not the God of the Scriptures.

There can be no middle path here. Either there is great error and sin in receiving the doctrine of the Trinity; or there is great error and sin in rejecting it. The subject renders everything like compromise impossible. Everyone will indeed judge for himself, and to his own master will stand or fall. But it is plain, that those who adopt and those who reject the views which it gives of the Supreme Being, possess different and opposite religions, and so far as relates to this point, can have no concord either in their faith or worship.

It is amazing that any who acknowledge the influence which the *disposition* has over the understanding, or who admit that *belief* of duty is necessary to the intelligent performance of it, should doubt that moral accountability attaches to the *opinions* as well as to the conduct of men. It is a principle recognized by the common sense of mankind in the ordinary transactions of life; and is written in the word of God in sunbeams. Whoever reads attentively what the Bible teaches concerning the testimony of God, and the guilt of *not believing* it, cannot but perceive that a fearful responsibility is connected with the religious opinions which we adopt. " He that believeth not God, *hath made him a liar*, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son." Suppose then that a part of that record contains the evidence of the Supreme Divinity of Jesus Christ, who will say that there is no sin, as well as error, in adopting a contrary opinion?

In the *second* place, the importance of the doctrine will appear yet more manifest, if we consider the necessary connection which it holds with other truths and facts revealed in the Scriptures. To select but a single point for illustration. How different must be the views which men form of the mediation of Christ, particularly of the greatness and moral value of those sacrifices which he made for the salvation of men, of his all-sufficiency to save, and of his intercession, according as they believe or reject the doctrine of his real and proper Divinity? How is it possible to attach the same moral dignity to the actions and sufferings of one who is merely created or human, as of one who is also Divine? Who therefore will say, that the moral influence exerted by Jesus Christ is not most deeply affected by the manner in which this great article of our faith is determined? It is not too much to say, that this single circumstance makes an infinite difference in the character of him, whom we are to acknowledge as our Savior, and that it may lay a foundation for an infinite difference in the method by which we apprehend that our salvation is to *be* accomplished. Particularly is it true, that whatever views affect the dignity of Christ's person, affect in the same degree his qualifications to make an atonement for sin; and the nearly universal rejection of this last doctrine, by those who reject the Divinity of Christ, proves that they are likely to stand or fall together.

I might mention other topics, which are intimately connected with the subject of this discourse, and show how strongly they influence both our feelings and conduct; I might dwell, in particular, on the effect which it must have on our devotions, and especially on our addresses to Christ, to regard him as possessed of infinite perfections; but what has been said is sufficient to show the great importance of the doctrine which has been discussed, as an article of faith.

I add *thirdly*, that it is no less deeply connected with our hopes as immortal beings. If the worship of the only true God has anything to do with our present character, or our future prospects; if it can have any influence on the question of our acceptance with God, whether we trust in Christ as the great atoning sacrifice for sinners, or rely upon some other ground for pardon and eternal life; then is the doctrine of the Trinity at the foundation of our hopes as immortal beings. Nor should it be forgotten, that if we refuse this way of salvation which God has provided through his Son, "there remains no more sacrifice for sin." There is but one Savior, and one way of salvation. If we mistake here, our error is, or may be, fatal. In like manner, if we renounce the Holy Spirit, we have no other Sanctifier, Comforter, nor Guide. We reject the appointed and only efficient agent of regeneration, of progressive holiness, and of inward and spiritual blessedness. Of such importance is the doctrine which has been considered. All that is most material to our worship, to our faith, and to our hopes, is involved in it.

In view of the evidence which has been presented in support of this great article of revealed religion, we may learn, my brethren, how little it has to fear from the spirit of deep and earnest investigation, which the present age has awakened. If there be a sentiment of the Bible which invites inquiry on the ground of evidence, it is the doctrine of the Trinity. It is built on no preconceived opinions of the mode of the divine existence. It is derived purely from testimony. The Scriptures being divinely inspired, the declarations which they contain may be regarded as ultimate facts, having the same relation to moral, which the phenomena of nature have to physical, science. Since therefore the doctrine of the Trinity is a fair inference from these declarations, it can no more be shaken by investigation, than the theory of Newton concerning the visible universe.

What strong ground of hope and consolation have they who have made this God their refuge! An everlasting Father and Friend; an infinite Savior, and an almighty Sanctifier, united in accomplishing their salvation, and engaged to make them completely and forever blessed. What a guarantee of ultimate safety and happiness this is; and how is it possible to contemplate it, but with wonder and joy!

Who then can estimate the consequences of rejecting a doctrine, supported by such evidence, and involving such interests? Are any of you, my hearers, tempted to do this? Consider whether your doubts arise from having carefully and thoroughly studied the Scriptures, accompanied with frequent and earnest prayer to God for divine teaching; or, whether it be not for some other reasons, which will be less satisfactory to you in the day of final account. The responsibility which is assumed by such a rejection, may well awaken the deepest solicitude. Expunge the evidence which the Bible furnishes of the truth of the doctrine, and you blot out the light of revelation, and cover its pages with chaotic darkness. Shut out the trembling, anxious sinner from that divine refuge which is here provided for him, and you bid him trust in an arm of flesh, though the curse of heaven is denounced against the man who does it. But this is not all. You hush the still, small voice of that Spirit, which speaks to his soul and convinces him of sin. No breath of spiritual life passes through the valley of death; and no Star of Bethlehem arises to guide the inquiring mind to Jesus.

Soon the veil which now hides these invisible glories will be removed; and then all who are permitted to enter into heaven, will doubtless, with one heart and voice, ascribe " blessing, and honor, and glory, and power unto Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the LAMB." Then will it be known, by blissful experience, what it is to enjoy the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost," for ever and ever.

www.CreationismOnline.com